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NEWS RELEASE

May 13, 2009

Contact: UM President's Office, 406-243-2311.

CALEB SHIELDS, PHYLLIS WASHINGTON TO RECEIVE UM'S HIGHEST HONOR

MISSOULA -

The University of Montana will award honorary doctorate degrees to Caleb Shields and Phyllis J. (Peterson) Washington during 2009 Commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 16, at the Adams Center.

Shields, an enrolled Sioux-and respected leader from the Fort Peck Reservation, will receive an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters during the 9:30 a.m. ceremony for the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Technology.

Shields was nominated for UM's highest honor by Kate Shanley, UM professor of Native American studies and special assistant to the provost for Native American and indigenous education. In nominating him, she wrote: "Mr. Shields' outstanding accomplishments over his 50-year career stand as testimony to his deep commitment to his own people from the Fort Peck Reservation, to the state of Montana, and to Indian Country and the nation in general.

"Mr. Shields has worked tirelessly for the past 30 years to promote better tribal-government-to-state-government relations, preserve our natural resources through careful management and enhance our historical understandings of the people of this great state of Montana."



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Born on the Fort Peck Reservation in 1938, Shields left upon graduating from high school in 1956 to join the U.S. Navy, serving for seven years. He then worked for Vanguard

Electronics in California and Mexico before returning to the reservation in 1973 to serve his people as the planning district director. From 1975 to 1999, he was an elected official on the Fort Peck Tribal Executive Board and held the position of tribal chair from 1991 to 1997.

During his time as tribal chair, Shields was widely regarded as one of the most influential tribal government leaders in the United States. Shields spoke in a UM O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West lecture series in 1999, focusing on two of his abiding interests, Indian health and political rights. Former U.S. Rep. Pat Williams, now a Senior Fellow at the O'Connor Center, remarked that Shields was "one of the nation's most articulate and forceful Native American leaders."

Recently, Shields led a joint task force to assemble and coordinate a book, "The History of the Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana, 1800-2000." Historians say the book is an invaluable, comprehensive history of both written and oral accounts of the Assiniboiné and Sioux in Montana.

Although formally retired, Shields remains active in tribal affairs and continues to advocate for the betterment of Native Americans and a more harmonious state and nation.

Phyllis J. Washington, a 1964 alumna of UM's School of Education, will receive an Honorary Doctor of Education during the 2 p.m. ceremony for the professional schools of business administration, fine arts, journalism and education and the College of Forestry and Conservation and the College of Health Professions and Biomedical Sciences.

Washington was nominated for the honorary doctorate by John Lundt, professor and chair of the Department of Educational Leadership in the UM School of Education. In his

words, "... Phyllis Washington has clearly made the active support of her alma mater and the field of education her mission in life... I have never encountered anyone who has consistently demonstrated the extraordinary level of dedication to The University of Montana and the School of Education that I have observed in Mrs. Washington."

A native Montanan, Washington attended Great Falls schools, where she found the inspiration to pursue a career in education. After graduating from UM, she taught second and third grades in Missoula, earning a reputation as an enthusiastic and innovative teacher. Later, Washington progressed to exploring other interests in antiques and interior design. Her current business, Phyllis Washington Antiques, offers educational seminars in Palm Desert, Calif.

Like her husband, Dennis R. Washington, she is an avid supporter and benefactor of education. She served as a UM trustee and later as chair for the record-setting 1990-97 capital campaign. Phyllis also chairs the Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation, itself a major supporter of education.

Through the creation of many scholarships and graduate fellowships, the Washingtons make it possible for hundreds of young people to receive a higher education. Additionally they have contributed to UM building and renovation projects, including the Gallagher Building for the School of Business Administration, the historic Prescott House and the Washington-Grizzly Stadium. Most recently, Phyllis led fundraising efforts and influenced the unique design for the new Phyllis J. Washington Education Center. The center will train teachers in state-of-the-art classrooms that enable distance learning technology.

Roberta Evans, dean of the School of Education, wrote in support of Phyllis Washington's nomination for the honorary doctorate: "A tireless advocate of our faculty and students, she is the epitome of the gracious supporter – always eager to learn more and



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dedicated to helping in any way she can. As a result, she is a model for service and altruism for all – and her lessons are those from which all of us can benefit.”

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UM President George Dennison said Shields and Washington are Montanans with the standing and stature to provide excellent role models for new graduates.

“Not only can we present to the graduates examples of our high expectations of them,” Dennison said, “we also have the opportunity to recognize outstanding service to the people of Montana as we honor these two excellent candidates with the highest award an academic institution can bestow.”

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